DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 595 PS 011 702

AUTHOR Suelzle, Marijean
TITLE Educational Destinies Before the School Bell Rings.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 31p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Sociological Society (Milwaukee, WI, April 4, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Problems; Blacks; Case Studies; *Day Care Centers; *Discipline Problems; Failure; *Individual Development; Infants; Longitudinal Studies; Observation; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; *Problem Children; *Social Environment

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the operations of a community-based, racially-mixed, day-long, day care center, its social environment and the staff's response to one very young, disruptive black boy. Data for the study were collected over a 3-year period of participant observation among approximately 25 children ranging in age from 2 through 5 from low income families. Center personnel consisted of a director, four teachers (all with college degrees), three aides, and a number of occasional volunteers. Observational records amounting to a total of 220 hours of observational time were made by nine undergraduate students. Observations provided a record of how the center's expectations for prosocial behavior among the children were regularly thwarted by a child (called Barry) who cried and hit others when required to share and take turns and who could not sustain interaction with others. After three years, the social environment created for the child by the center staff did not encourage the development of personality traits which could be expected to be compatible with subsequent school success. Implications of the problems in the center are discussed in terms of the reluctance of adults to impose on black children standards for behavior perceived to originate in the white middle-class. It is suggested that such reluctance can amount to racial tracking through exclusion from structured learning experiences. (Author/RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED191595

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Educational Destinies Before the School Bell Rings*

Marijean Suelzle

Department of Sociology
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL 60201

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marijean Suelzle

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 011702

*Paper presented at Session on Education Through the Life Cycle at Midwest Sociological Society Annual Meetings, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 4, 1980. Data was collected from Fall 1976 through Winter 1979.

I am grateful to Richard White, Nick Curtis, Joyce Gab, Laura Heil, Susan Seligman, James Borgelt, Jan Dropik, Michael Hampton, and Patricia Kanter who collected the observational data and to Penelope P. Croghan for conducting some of the initial data analysis.

Abstract

In community-based day care centers ideologies concerning a respect for racial and social differences can come into conflict with the practical necessity of maintaining bureaucratic orderliness. An unintended consequence of routine practices designed to promote both racial differences and harmonious group relationships can be the perpetuation of discrimination through the exclusion of minority children from structured learning experiences. The experiences of one young black boy in a racially mixed day care center in the midwest over a three-year period are analyzed to illustrate how staff accommodations to his initial aggressiveness contributed to his failure to acquire behaviors which could be expected to be compatible with subsequent school success.

BLANK PAGE

An increase in the labor force participation rates for women was reflected in an increase in enrollments in day care facilities (centers and homes) from 9 percent in 1964 to 31 percent in 1976 for children 3 to 4 years of age (Snapper and Ohms 1977). Children enrolled in nursery school and kindergarten also reflect this increased rate. For the one-third of preschool children who spend several years in group care with adults who are not kin, two categories of environment--family and day care--share the responsibility for those children's socialization and development.

Historically a part-time nursery school experience was provided as a luxury for higher income families who could purchase a peer-group socialization experience for their preschool children. A full-time day care experience was provided as a social service or welfare benefit for lower income families where parental care was judged inadequate or mothers worked full time. The traditional nursery school took a child-centered and present-oriented approach, assigned primary value to play activities, and assumed the child to be intrinsically motivated towards increasing social and intellectual competence. Traditional day care took an adult-centered and present-oriented approach, providing custodial care, or an adult-centered and future-oriented approach, providing direct instruction assumed to compensate for developmental deficits. The traditional nursery school assumed competency on the part of family as educator whereas traditional day care assumed incompetency or inadequacy.

The 1960's and 1970's saw widespread publicity given to the expansion of programs aimed at counteracting the effects of poverty on development. Head Start has been the most extensive and prominent of these programs. But, the increase in enrollments in day care facilities over the past two decades is not accounted for by Head Start and other remedial programs alone. Liberal educators, trained in the nursery school tradition of valuing play activities,

challenged the "obvious" solution of providing direct instruction to preschool children. To them the "obvious" solution was quite different. They maintained that cultural and racial differences should be respected, not remediated to white middle-class normative expectations for older children. If supportive teachers provided a materially enriched group environment, and if economic, racial and ethnic differences were respected, then they maintained readiness for specific academic learning would develop spontaneously in all children. Day care programs evolved as expansions of the traditional nursery school ideology with an emphasis on unstructured play activities allowing for self-expression and creativity. School-like routines were avoided or minimized.

The vast majority of day care programs have evolved an interactionist or eclectic approach somewhere along the continuum from remediation through instruction to free expression through play. Since they tend to be community-based rather than national in scope, they attract little academic or research interest. Their lack of a federal policy mandate makes funds for, or interest in, evaluation almost nonexistent, except in the most global sense of setting safety and staffing standards. The very idiosyncracy of the programs makes large-scale comparisons difficult. Family and child care environments tend to co-vary, further confounding methodological problems. That is, factors such as cost of care, geographical location of the center, staff qualifications, and curriculum tend to result in systematic differences in the socioeconomic backgrounds of children enrolled at different centers.

The fact that social mobility through education is often contingent upon age-graded normative achievement raises serious theoretical and ethical issues about the introduction of tracking at the preschool level. Rosenbaum (1976) likens the tracking system to a tournament--when students are successful,

they win only the right to go on to the next round; when they lose, they lose forever. Ideally, unstructured activities allowing for self-expression and creativity should permit a range of outcomes (Denzin 1973). For middle class children from stable supportive family environments the entire range of programs may be compatible with subsequent school success. Yet, if children at 2½ years of age enter day care programs from different socioeconomic or racial backgrounds, is it not possible that they already differ in terms of competencies that will be later valued by schools? If they are all permitted to freely choose their own activities throughout the day, then is it not possible that white middle class children, say, will choose, be successful at, enjoy, and learn school-like routines (reading, art work, following directions, and respecting authority) whereas lower income black children will be less likely to do so? Is it not possible that benign noninterference can perpetuate and accentuate racial and other group differences in competencies? Is it not possible that before the school bell rings, some children may have already lost the tournament? They may be self-expressive and creative but not in ways which will be rewarded or successful during the next round of schooling. These are the theoretical and ethical questions which the present paper seeks to address.

The Research Setting

The data for this study were collected over a three-year period of participant observation in a community-based full day care center in the midwest. There were approximately twenty-five children enrolled at any one time with about twenty eligible for financial assistance due to their families' low incomes. About half were 2-year-olds, with the remainder split about equally between 3, 4 and 5-year-olds. The center was open fifty-one weeks per year from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. although all the observations were conducted during a six-month

period, October through March, in each of the three years. In addition to the director there were four teachers, all with college degrees, three aides, and a number of occasional volunteers. Very rarely were all twenty-five children in attendance. Most of the time fifteen to eighteen children were present, while on an extremely cold or snowy day, only seven or eight might show up. This is somewhat of an indication of the background of the children. If the family and job situation was stable higher socioeconomic status, the children would be more likely to be present all the time except for illness or family vacations. However, if the parents do not work every day, they do not take the children into the center. The center was racially mixed with a majority of the children being black.

The center was begun in the early 1970's by a group of parents who wanted their children cared for during the day. They located a single-room facility in the basement of a church, and during the first three years supplemented state and federal funding with fund-raisers and volunteer labor. At the end of the initial three-year period the director, who was also one of the founders, left. During the fourth year, the unfortunate choice of a director described as "extremely authoritarian" led to the resignation of all but one of the teachers and subsequently of the director as well. Added to the parent board's problem of hiring a new director and several substitute teachers, a state licensing representative found multiple building code violations and ordered the center closed in that location. In the latter half of the fourth year a new young (24 year old) and inexperienced director was hired and a new multi-room location, also in a church basement, found several blocks away. With the move community support became almost nonexistent. About half of the children were placed in other centers by their parents and only two out of sixteen parent

board members remained. Financial problems became paramount, occupying about half of the new director's time during the latter half of the fourth year and continuing throughout the fifth when our participant observation began.

A second visit from the state licensing representative during the fifth year, found an insufficient number of teachers, a nonexistent board, and a disorganized program. The center was required to be reorganized or closed. A meeting with the community organization which handles state and federal reimbursements to licensed centers was the beginning of a second life for the center. A new 16-member board was established and began fund-raising, but both the curriculum and administration continued to be relatively unstructured. Board members expressed the wish that the director "would resign for some very nice reason," feeling caught between their friendly loyalty to him and their loyalty to a "good" day care center. Noise levels were regarded as excessive and the unstructured nature of the program to border on chaos or anarchy. With the recent history of crises, board members were reluctant to face the consequences of firing the director. Instead, teachers and board members relieved him of as many responsibilities as possible.

During the sixth year of the center's existence (and the second year of our participant observation), the director resigned. We shall refer to him as the transitional director. A new director whom we shall refer to as the stable-state director was hired to introduce some structure into the environment, but while still maintaining a humanistic, child-centered approach with the major goal of providing the children with a positive self-image. The stable-state director remained with the center during the second year and a half of our participant observation.

The new site acquired by the transitional director consisted of four

small classrooms plus adjoining hallways. A kitchen was shared with a nursery school class which met in an adjoining large room in the mornings. In the afternoons that large room was available to the center for large motor activities such as climbing, riding wheeled toys, and playing with balls. Of the four classrooms, one which was physically set apart from the others by the hallways was designated as the art room. It was distinguished from the others not only by being set apart, but also because it contained supplies such as easels, crayons, paints, paper, scissors, yarn and paste which were not found elsewhere. The art room was accessible through a single door. The other three rooms were grouped together and the transitional director had extra doorways cut to make it a completely flow-through environment. The two end rooms each had two doorways, one onto the hall and one into the adjoining room; the middle room thus had three doorways. Activities and supplies within these three rooms overlapped, or travelled with the children as the case might be, except for a stationary climbing loft in the larger of the three small rooms at one end. One of the first acts of the stable-state director was to block some of the doorways with low dividers so each room could be accessed only through one door. It was no longer as convenient for children to converge rapidly where the action was.

The daily schedule posted by the transitional director was as follows:

7:00 a.m. Self-selected activities: Puzzles, waterplay, record room
8:00 Records and body movement--climbing area; clean-up
8:30 Snack in art room; clean-up
9:00 Art room; clean-up
9:30 Outside play

10:30 Toileting, wash hands

10:45 Story, drama; clean-up

11:00 Lunch; clean-up

11:45 Toileting, wash hands

12:00-2:00 p.m. Naps

2:15 Toileting, wash hands

2:30 Snack; clean-up

2:45 Bike room, body movement

3:30 Small muscle activity, records, TV

The schedule was followed by the teachers more or less in terms of making activities available to the children but there was no set policy concerning where the children spent their time. They could basically go wherever they wanted to go and do whatever they wanted to do. A "wave motion" of excessive noise or behavior would be set up by one or two children's obvious enjoyment of an activity--jumping from the loft, rolling cars down an incline, dancing to a record--until all 13, 14 or 15 children present were in the same room squabbling over territorial rights to participate with the inevitable outcome being an accident or act of physical aggression, precipitating tears, and dissipation of the group.

The stable-state director developed a more detailed schedule assigning small groups of children to specific rooms in the morning and then rotating the groups between rooms for different activities. The three adjoining rooms became designated for specific activities--play and story time, music, and puzzles--as the art room had always been. As a result there was usually a more manageable number of four to six children per room at any one time.

The Research Procedures

Participant observation data were collected by nine upper division undergraduate students selected on the basis of previous related coursework and experience with young children. Four were male, five female. One (a male) was black. They were known to be observers working on a research project and were permitted to make jotted notes while essentially serving as aides in the center. Observations were made on a weekly basis during the fall and winter of three consecutive years from fall 1976 through winter 1979. Observers participated in the center for a four-hour period once a week for eight consecutive weeks during the fall and again in the winter. Full field notes, defined as an equivalent amount of time spent recording to that spent observing at a rate of roughly four pages of typewritten notes per hour, were required for all observational sessions in the fall and on alternate weeks during the winter. (In the winter every other week was devoted to conceptualization and exploring analytic frameworks in short working papers.) Even with the inevitable absences due to observer illnesses or center closings for holidays, observational records were collected on fifty-five sessions for a total of 220 hours of observational time.

The observers were part of a research team studying the actual practices in a variety of nursery and day care centers serving both normal and handicapped children from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Instruction was provided in how to conduct participant observation research and in how to write field notes but not in what was to be observed. The research team, varying in size from ten to twenty observers, met weekly in a two-hour seminar to exchange experiences and findings. The project was defined as exploratory, to detail the parameters of the mundane practices of group care for children

as distinct from stated philosophies. The amount of data collected was obviously staggering, and systematic analysis is barely underway. The center selected for discussion in this paper was chosen because it is believed representative of the eclectic community-based approach which characterizes most full day care at least in the midwest.

Data was recorded from the perspective of the participant observer. Systematic sampling of time frames with check lists was not feasible. Occasionally observers had the latitude to determine who or what they would observe, but for the most part they were assigned by the center staff to work with particular children or in a particular area. Consequently it was thought desireable to err on the side of collecting redundant information rather than risk distorting the characterization of a center by the unknown biases of a smaller number of observers over a shorter period of time.

The Environment, Competence, and Racial Tracking

The landmark Harvard Preschool Project, resulting in thirteen years of research directed by Burton L. White, collected longitudinal data on children from birth to six years of age in their own homes with the object of better understanding optimal human development (White and Watts 1973; White 1978; White, Kaban and Attanucci 1979). The major goal of the Preschool Project was to find out how the environments of highly competent and less competent children differ in early childhood. Environment was defined as "a set of human and nonhuman elements in the external world that are directly and observably connected with the child's experience and that may affect his development of competence either through participating in a developmentally pertinent experience, or by making such an experience more or less likely to occur, or more or less pleasurable for the child" (White and Watts 1973: 157).

The Preschool Project was begun assuming the primacy of direct cognitive instruction in optimizing developmental achievements. Project members set about studying how the educability of children could be maximized, with educability defined by whether children were projected to do (and did) very well, average, or significantly less well in elementary school. Later the term educability was dropped in favor of the term competence, measured in terms of the development of social and nonsocial (cognitive) abilities. The Preschool Project explicitly generalized their rationale and findings to the planning and evaluation of group child care environments (White and Watts 1973: 247):

> For many years, experienced, preschool practitioners have objected to the emphasis on cognitive development in certain preschool programs. Our study reinforces those objections, pointing as it does to the remarkable array of social skills exhibited by our competent children. To some extent, of course, by concentrating on children who cope well in all areas, we guarantee the presence of social skills in our picture of the competent child. Nevertheless, we believe that these skills are worthy of direct attention, since, from the earliest years, children acquire cognitive skills within a social matrix. Deficiencies in coping with that social matrix unquestionably make most educational experiences more difficult for children.

Some implications of the Harvard Preschool Project's recommendations with respect to the development of competence and racial tracking are explored by examining the experiences of one young black boy in our midwest center. He remained in the center over the entire three-year observational period, from the time he was 2½ until he attained the age of 5½, ready for entrance to elementary school. While the specific examples are obviously unique, in

general his experiences were not atypical of those of other black children, especially males, in the center.

The Social Environment

Knowledge of the physical environment is derived by children primarily from the regularity or consistency with which concrete objects respond when manipulated. Knowledge of the social environment, however, is arbitrary in the sense that it is based upon consensual agreements among people, comes only from people, and is learned only through feedback from people (Evans 1975: 232). No group environment for young children can be truly unstructured. All group environments have teachers, space, and equipment which imply opportunities and restrictions. It is the way in which the components are combined that constitute the program (Fein and Clarke-Stewart 1973). The program may be different for different children within it dependent upon the feedback received from others, and the consistency of that feedback. To some extent the desire to respect differences in behavioral expressiveness is inconsistent with the necessity of maintaining order in any group setting. When these goals come into conflict, when the behavior displayed by an individual threatens harmonious relationships for the entire group, then there is a great deal of latitude in how priorities will be assigned to eliminate the conflict. Although the specific resolutions may differ, prevailing patterns of prejudice and discrimination within the society as a whole may systematically bias the outcomes in the direction of the prevailing social order. The experiences of our young black boy, Barry, over the three-year observational period document how this can occur.

The day care center had behavioral expectations, some of which all staff agreed upon in ideology and in practice, and instilled in the children. For example, the doors to the kitchen and to adjacent areas of the church building were left open but the children knew they were not allowed to leave

the center classrooms and hallways unless they had to use the bathroom and then only if they asked permission first. The rule was seldom violated. Occasionally one of the younger children would wander over to a doorway, but readily return when a staff member called. Also, after eating breakfast, lunch or snack each child was held responsible for cleaning up his or her place at the table, putting reusable dishes and cutlery in the sink, and throwing disposable paper products away in a trash barrel. Over the three-year observational period there was never an example of a child being exempted from this requirement.

In other situations involving expectations for individual or group deportment, teachers varied concerning the range of behaviors which would be tolerated and concerning their responses when their levels of tolerance were exceeded. When Barry* entered the center as one of the youngest children at 2½ years he was very active both in terms of his individual use of space and materials and in terms of making social contact with others. The day care center had behavioral expectations that the children would share and that they would take turns. When these expectations were made explicit, either by another child or by an adult, Barry's most common response was to cry loudly and/or to lash out against the other in a physically aggressive fashion. The outbursts varied in frequency and intensity, but would reach the point of being repeated at approximately five-minute intervals. Initially the behavior might simply be attributed to his inability to interact with other children over an entire day due to his young age. In this case the staff member would remove him from the group activity, usually taking him out to the transitional director's office where he could lie down and calm down for awhile. As time

---

*Name is a pseudonym for this child as is the case for all other names used subsequently.

passed and age became less plausible as an explanation for the outbursts, Barry continued to be removed from the group but directed into another solitary activity. In either case he managed to gain the undivided attention of a staff member at the same time he was systematically removed from group activities.

When verbal reasoning was attempted, it was successful in quelling the crying, but not in maintaining Barry's involvement in the activity. For example, Barry decided that he would rather walk up and down the slide than slide down it. Other children objected verbally and physically by pushing and shoving. Barry began to wail. A staff member told him that he had to sit down or he might hurt himself, and that he had to take turns. He did as he was told but seemed to lose interest in the slide. He went down it a couple of more times then left it and did not go back to it for the rest of the time he spent in the room.

Lack of willingness or ability to share and take turns, combined with frequent crying, on one occasion resulted in physical punishment--a method of discipline found extremely rarely due to the fact that it would result in the automatic suspension of a staff member if brought to the attention of the director. The fact that an incident of this kind occurred and was not reported is indicative of the latent feelings shared among all the teachers towards Barry's disruptive behavior:

> At one point when Barry was grabbing a toy away from another child, (a staff member) tried to intervene, whereupon Barry cried and would not give up. (The staff member) spanked him on the rear and he wailed. She sat him down on a chair "until he decided to behave". The other children just looked at him for a moment, and then went back to their play, amidst all the crying and screaming.

A more subtle example of the use of physical punishment is illustrated by the manner in which a staff member can choose to ignore or even encourage aggression against a child whose behavior is annoying. In one instance Barry and another boy began by role playing that they were boxers but accelerated the interaction into a genuine fist fight.

> Barry was constantly on top of Norman, so when Norman finally got Barry, (the staff member) was yelling, "Good boy, Norman!! That's the way to do it!" She told me it was so good to see Barry get beat, because he can be such a bully but then is a cry baby when it's not going his way. Barry started crying as usual.

Since the behavior was annoying and levels of tolerance between staff members were different, inconsistencies in disciplining techniques occurred with respect to the same incident as well as between incidents. Inconsistencies could arise between staff members:

> Barry was crying for some reason. (The stable-state director) told him that if he stopped his crying he could have some juice and then she left the room. So (the observer) gave the other boys some juice and Barry started crying very loudly saying, "I want some juice." (The observer) replied, "Barry, you can have some juice, but didn't (the director) say that you had to stop crying first?" He started crying louder, screaming actually. (The observer) was tempted to give him the juice. A few minutes of crying later, (the director) rushed in and said that of course he could have some juice and she poured him a glass and told him to stop crying now because "we don't like that kind of behavior here."

Inconsistencies also arose because the staff member's patience simply became

exhausted as one of the observers found during Barry's second year when he was 3½ years old:

> Barry and Roger had meanwhile quietly entered and poured themselves some cereal and milk. They started out quietly munching away but soon were goofing off until Barry spilt his cup of cereal all over the floor. Barry approached me across the room and pointed to his mess. I asked him how it happened. He was very honest about it, saying, "Me and Roger were playing." I said, "Well, that's too bad it happened but now you are going to have to clean it up, since you spilled it." I told him that the first thing we'd have to do is find some paper towels. So he ran off to the bathroom and came back carrying a handful of them. He was fine until he started cleaning up the cheerios and milk scattered all over the floor. He commenced his never-ending crying again, "I can't do this!" I said of course he could, that all he had to do was wipe up what he spilled and I would wipe over it with a wet cloth. "But I'm getting all wet," he cried, working himself into a tantrum. I tried to work the situation around so that he saw that he was almost done and had done a good job at cleaning up, but was unsuccessful. Finally I told him that that was good enough and I took care of the details. Of course the minute I let him go he ran out of the room, the tears completely forgotten! The other children, I've seemed to notice, really don't pay much attention to Barry's crying antics.

By the age of 5 years, his last in the day care center, Barry was described by another observer (the black male) as one of the two wildest by far of the children in the center (the second was also an older black male child):

Barry through his actions displays a desire for attention more so than any of the other children. For example, he will purposely fall down and cry if another child accidently bumps into him. He is the most selfish of all the children, and often cries if he can't have his own way. "Barry, trade cars with Dave for awhile. You have had that car for quite awhile now." "I WANT THE FASTEST CAR" he screams, as he stomps his feet and wildly swings the car to the floor.

After three years then the social environment created for Barry by the staff at the center did not encourage the development of personality traits which could be expected to be compatible with subsequent school success. The Harvard Preschool Project generated the hypothesis that social competence would be associated with cognitive or non-social competence, because children acquire cognitive skills within a social matrix. Our data enables us to explore the relationship.

Competence

Activities designed by the staff to involve more than one child were oriented towards promoting school-like routines--listening and paying attention, following directions, sitting still and being quiet, respecting authority, sharing and taking turns. Barry's involvement was quite marginal in those teacher-initiated group activities particularly emphasizing direct instruction. For example, after the stable-state director introduced more structure into the daily schedule, the first activity in the morning consisted...

...of the children sitting on the floor on little carpet squares in a circle in the playroom and being led by the teachers in songs or perhaps having a story read to them, and any announcements for the

day being circulated to the children. There are more than enough carpet squares to go around, so that each child can have a square as his or her own and so that, in fact, almost everyone could have two squares, if there were some reason for that to be necessary. Sometimes, some of the children don't follow the prescribed rules. Either they don't sit down on the floor, i.e., they stand or they crawl or walk around or they sit somewhere other than where they're supposed to be, or they sit on the floor but they fail to obtain a carpet square to sit on.

Barry had sat down on the floor and gotten a carpet square but he failed to stay on it. He got up, walked about three feet from where he was, and sat down next to an older black boy. They began engaging in a conversation. Don, another small black boy, had failed to obtain a carpet to sit on. After Barry left his carpet, Don decided that he would sit down on the carpet that Barry had been sitting on. Prior to this point, Barry had expressed no particular interest in staying on his carpet. In addition to his conversation, he had gotten up and walked over to one of the toy shelves, fingering various articles for a while, and then going back to his carpet, sitting on or near it for 30 seconds or so, and then getting up and leaving again.

Almost immediately after Don sat down on his carpet, Barry noticed that this had taken place. He got up, ran over to where Don was, and hit him on the side of the head. Don began screaming, not too loudly, and whining, "No, no, no," over and over again, with Barry repeating over and over again, in the midst of his whining and screaming, "My carpet, my carpet, my carpet."

Needless to say, such outbursts are disruptive of direct instruction. Therefore staff act to resolve them relatively quickly by ending the incident. Either the children become quiet, if not attentive, or they were removed from the group to a hallway or bathroom where other classroom materials were not available to them as substitute activities. Barry was routinely inattentive or in isolation.

Much direct instruction also occurred with smaller groupings of children in which case a child who was disinterested could substitute other activities. Despite Barry's obvious interest in books (he would take out a book and request a staff member to read it), it was difficult for him to remain involved if other children also actively participated:

> I sat down at the table and Barry and Lynn immediately climbed up on my lap. I read the story to Ruth, Barry, Lynn and Ron. They all wanted to take turns turning the pages but it didn't quite work out that way. Barry cried when Ruth insisted on doing it herself. I told Ruth that she could turn the page one time and Barry could do it another. Barry grabbed the book off the table and wanted me to read it only to him. I told him that we had to put the book on the table so that everyone could see the pictures. He got mad, grabbed the book off the table and ran out of the room with it. Ruth ran after him and they started hitting each other in the hall. I put Lynn, who had been sitting quietly on my lap, down and went after them. I took the book from Ruth and told both Barry and Ruth that neither of them could have it. I explained that I was trying to read the story to everyone and that they were welcome to come into the art room and listen but that they would have to

be quiet. Barry wandered into the manipulative room and Ruth followed me back into the art room.

Barry's inability to benefit from direct instructional sessions was not limited to those sessions where verbal and language skills were being emphasized, but generalized to other types of instruction as well:

Music--There is a box of instruments on top of the piano. Barry asked for a drum out of the box. Soon all the other children wanted an instrument too. There were plenty of different kinds to go around and soon the room was filled with all kinds of sounds. This was interrupted by Barry, who started crying because someone else wanted to try his drum. The staff were unable to quiet him down; he was taken out of the room.

Television--During an educational TV program, Barry ran up and grabbed the bedspreads which served as curtains for two quiet girls playing underneath the loft.

Sports--(A staff member) was in the big nursery room attempting to teach the kids how to play kickball. Barry was trying to monopolize the game. He would start to cry when any of the other kids kicked the ball. As soon as (the observer) walked into the room he left the game and ran over.

Racial Tracking and Alternative Hypotheses

If all the examples recorded consistently revealed Barry to be unable to control his crying or to engage in sustained interactions with others, then one might suspect an emotional disturbance or developmental disability rather than an environment benign and permissive enough to accept and facilitate the failure of a child not to develop school-like

behaviors. Such was not the case. For example, when Barry was permitted some risk-taking to test his mastery of the environment, he was quite able to control his own tears:

> Barry appeared to have a penchant for climbing up and jumping up and hurting himself when he fell. At least once in the course of the day, he took a bad fall despite everything (the observer) could do to prevent him from doing so, went in to another teacher, cried for about 30 seconds, came back in and proceeded to climb back up and pull the same kind of stunt with results that were not nearly as negative the second time around. "You'd better watch it or you're going to fall." "I won't fall," was the immediate reply as he climbed back up into the loft for another jump.

In another instance when the observer, a male athlete, set up a standard university basketball drill for the children, Barry exhibited no problems listening and paying attention, following directions, respecting authority, or sharing and taking turns. A basketball goal had been placed on one of the support beams under the loft, about five feet off the ground since the observer's previous visit the week before (during the second year of observations when Barry was four years old):

> The thing was set up this way. An area around the basket was cleared, and chairs set up on the "green line" on which the children were instructed to sit. The ball would be given to the child occupying the first chair, who would then approach the basket and shoot either until scoring (not my idea: the children started playing that way, and I picked up on it) or until I

thought a sufficient time had passed in which they could attempt to do so; say, 20 or 30 seconds. That child would then give the ball to the child newly occupying the first chair and go to the end chair. Everyone, of course, had moved down one space leaving said chair vacant, and setting up the next player. The process was then continued, repeating itself intermittently. I am pleased to report that the children behaved beautifully, and played the game just the way I had outlined it for them. Not only did the process go smoothly, but the noise level was kept relatively low.

So orderly and enjoyable was the experience, that I decided to try something even more daring. That is, to have each child take one shot at the basket, and then quickly return the ball to the "on-deck" man (oops, sorry--person) who would then take a quick shot, etc. It's a standard basketball drill, the purpose of which is to build speed, skill, and coordination, the object being to maximize both speed and smoothness. And, by God, they did it! The noise level did increase markedly, but it was no worse than usual for the playroom in the morning, really. Yours truly provided some "play by play" and cheerleader-like "pepper." (You know: "Atta boy, O.K., O.K., way dago, Nice shootin' there baby, Let's do it, Let's do it, C'mon pick it up, Get the lead out, Super shot," etc.) I also played a little "defense" once in a while to add some new spice to the game.

I saw, too, that once in a while each child got a basket, usually by lifting him or her up to the hoop and allowing them to shoot from a better vantage point. The overall success of

the venture is indicated by the fact that a somewhat focused, structured activity was continued by children who are three and four years old (and who possess short attention spans) for well over an hour! The children saw something about cooperation and sharing. On numerous occasions, when a child "lost" the ball while shooting, or when it was inadvertently "passed" to the wrong person in the procession, invariably the person recovering the ball would voluntarily and immediately return the ball to its "rightful owner" without any prompting on my part. Even Barry didn't suffer from his normal condition of equating possession of the moment with the, "It's mine now" philosophy.

And, as early as his first year at the center, Barry at three years old could follow all these school-like routines while sitting still and being quiet too--if it was not required that other children be present too. One of the observers took a group of eight children to work puzzles:

> Barry and Matthew got into an argument over who was going to attempt to do a certain puzzle. I walked over and told them that they had to decide between themselves or each had to go and get different ones to work on. Barry suddenly decided that he would let Matthew do the puzzle and grabbed my hand. He pulled me into the quiet room, sat down and handed me the book that I had read to them on Tuesday. I was really surprised that he had remembered it. Barry climbed up on the bench next to me and I read him the book. When we were finished, he asked me to read it again. I told him that we had to return to the puzzle room to see how everyone else was doing on their puzzles. Barry stood in the

middle of the room, squatted down, wrinkled up his face and said, "NO!"

The observer did leave, being unable to devote full-time to a single child in a setting which implies group responsibilities. As usual Barry was permitted to choose an alternative for himself, which he proceeded to do.

Denzin (1977) has suggested that in order to counteract the presumed negative effects of teacher control it is necessary to take the work of young children seriously. He hypothesizes that young children will create their own social order and implies that the social order so created will be beneficial for children's development. Indeed, in our observational records there are a couple of instances recorded which would lend at least partial support to such an optimistic philosophy. For example, when Barry was four years old:

> There was alot of commotion going on in the breakfast room. Barry had entered with a book in his hand and set the book down on the table. However, a couple minutes later Ruth picked up the book and was just holding it. Barry, the minute after noticing that she was holding "his" book, started whining to (the stable state director) obviously ready to start in on another tantrum if he didn't get his book back by the way he was jumping around. Ruth very simply said, "No Barry, I was just saving it for you." The tears, the whining all just disappeared as quickly as it started. He said, "Oh," thought for a quick minute and said "OK".

On another occasion;

> Brenda wanted to play with something that Barry was holding. However, he didn't want to let her play with it. So she told him that he couldn't have the penny then. He started whining and saying that he wanted the penny. "Then give me the toy." He said, "No," so she grabbed her penny back. Apparently she had given him a penny that she had and was now using it to get her way. He said, "OK, here," and she gave him back the penny.

In the first example, Ruth emerges as a diplomat, avoiding Barry's tantrum albeit at the cost of giving in to his proprietary demand. In the second, Brenda utilizes bribery and manipulation, not unlike the staff's ability to avoid tears by deflecting Barry from an emotionally charged group activity to an individual pursuit. Neither incident really promotes Barry's social competence so much as coping with his lack of it.

Children also have the option of avoiding or rejecting Barry in a way that the staff really do not:

> Barry wanted the bicycle Brenda was riding and began to claw at her face and push her off the bike. Brenda just sort of looked at me and almost started to cry. Then she looked away and fought off the tears. Barry started to cry. Brenda got off of the bike and ran away to play with the dolls.

And again, in another incident:

> Barry as usual began to cry when the game did not center around him. Ruth and Matthew expressed their disapproval. They pushed him away and told him he couldn't play.

At the other extreme from avoidance and rejection, the children also have the option of modeling themselves after Barry rather than after the staff. From time to time some, particularly other black boys, did so. Here we have the genesis of the game of "get the teacher" in which the child inevitably ends up the loser from an educational standpoint:

> All of a sudden, Barry and Stanley came barging into the room, each carrying a plastic knife from the art room. They approached me as if they were going to use the knives to attack me. I said, "Hey, I don't think that that is what knives are supposed to be used for, do you?" They just said, "We're going to get you!" (A teacher) at this point noticed the boys and said, "Hey, we don't use the knives like that in here, go put them away." They knew that they were wrong and so really didn't make any fuss.

And again,

> The rabbit was out of its cage and had crawled into a corner under a table where the children couldn't quite reach it. After screaming at the rabbit to come out and play--he didn't--John began breaking up sticks into little pieces. Barry got down on his hands and knees and they began throwing the sticks at the rabbit. After about five seconds of this I, in a rather loud and offensive voice, said, "Stop throwing sticks at the rabbit." Barry immediately turned around and said, "Well, he likes it." I said, "No, he doesn't like it. Stop throwing sticks at the rabbit." This stopped the stick throwing episode but the screaming and yelling at the rabbit--and at one point the calling of dirty names like "pooh-pooh" and "ass hole" and "turkey" and others did not abate.

Discussion

Over the past three decades much attention has been paid to the role of the public school system in perpetuating inequality in American society. At the preschool level the emphasis has been on developing settings which would overcome the presumed deficits of lower income, particularly black, families in preparing children to enter the public schools on a competitive footing. In preschool child care environments there operates a strong ideology advocating concern with the total child at individually-paced sequences of developmental readiness. Individual differences are respected and performance is typically not graded. In publicly-funded centers at least, respect for individual differences is ideologically generalized to the group level with an emphasis on respect for racial and cultural differences. There is a reluctance to impose what are perceived as white middle class standards especially upon black children. At the same time, since preschool child care environments do aggregate large numbers of children in one setting there is a need to inculcate norms of group behavior to keep noise levels bearable, provide for the physical safety of the children involved, and permit learning activities to take place. Ideologies concerning respect for individual and racial differences can come into conflict with the practical necessity of maintaining bureaucratic orderliness.

When Barry first entered the center at the age of 2½ years, his aggressive behavior and emotional outbursts were rewarded by individualized staff attention apart from group activities. Over time inconsistencies in disciplining techniques emerged in the absence of standardized behavioral expectations or strategies for applying sanctions. Barry's involvement in

group activities remained quite marginal. His behavior frequently became disruptive enough to exceed some staff member's tolerance level, resulting in his exclusion from on-going activities. A benign environment fostered his inability to benefit from direct instructional sessions. Other children developed strategies for coping with Barry's lack of social competence, sometimes conciliatory, sometimes involving outright avoidance and rejection, and sometimes following his leadership in violating normative expectations of appropriate behavior. If the preschool experience is viewed as the first round in a tournament model for predicting subsequent school success, then Barry's experiences appear to have prepared him for failure at the next round within the elementary school setting. To the extent that the expressive and aggressive traits with which he entered the day care center are more characteristic of the behavior of lower income and black children than of higher income and white children, then an educational philosophy purporting to respect racial differences has the potential for being implemented in an ultimately discriminatory fashion. Racial tracking via exclusion from structured learning experiences will have helped to mould educational destinies before the school bell tolls.

References

Denzin, Norman K. (ed.)

1973 Children and Their Caretakers. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books.

Denzin, Norman K.

1977 Childhood Socialization: Studies in the Development of Language, Social Behavior, and Identity. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Evans, Ellis D.

1975 Contemporary Influences in Early Childhood Education. Second Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Fein, Greta G. and Alison Clarke-Stewart

1973 Day Care in Context. New York: John Wiley.

Rosenbaum, James E.

1976 Making Inequality: The Hidden Curriculum of High School Tracking. New York: John Wiley.

Snapper, Kurt J. and JoAnne S. Ohms

1977 The Status of Children. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Human Development Services (DHEW Publication No. (OHDS) 78-30133).

White, Burton L., Barbara T. Kaban, and Jane S. Attanucci

1979 The Origins of Human Competence: The Final Report of the Harvard Preschool Project. Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books.

White, Burton L. and Jean Carew Watts

1973 Experience and Environment: Major Influences on the Development of the Young Child. Volume 1. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.